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# COMPUTER DECISIONS

THE MAGAZINE FOR MIS EXECUTIVES

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SPECIAL REPORT

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## NEWS

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Harold Brooks

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Upgrading from DEC's new VAX 8300 to the VAX 8500 also requires the purchase of a new machine. The MV/15000s are not upgradable to the top-of-the-line MV/20000s, however.

Although the MV/15000 offers approximately the same MIPS power as Data General's MV/20000 Model 1, the base prices for the MV/15000 series are \$40,000 to \$50,000 cheaper, according to the vendor. However, the Model 1 offers 64 Mbytes of main memory and approximately 30 Mbytes of input/output bandwidth—twice as much bandwidth and main memory as that offered in the new series. In addition, the Model 1 can be upgraded to the dual-processor MV/20000 Model 2, which competes against the DEC VAX 8800. □

## A better X.25 link to come?

Reaping the benefits of X.25 communications may get a lot easier for IBM users in 1987. NCP Packet Switching Interface is a weak product that will be replaced by a full release of X.25, "maybe as early as this month," speculates Rudolf Strobl, senior communications analyst with Arthur D. Little Inc., Cambridge, MA. The "mature X.25 product" has reportedly been available to European users since 1984. Although those in touch with European users say the new X.25 product is stronger than NPSI, it remains to be seen how well the product will work with the U.S. implementation of X.25 (see related News Analysis story on page 16). □

## Silence can be patented

A competitor has charged that Hayes Microcomputer Products Inc. is trying to edge out other manufacturers by patenting two seconds of silence.

In a suit against Hayes and another manufacturer that has patented software that controls Hayes modems, U.S. Robotics Inc. (Chicago) contends

that the two vendors are trying to monopolize the market with frivolous patents. The Hayes modem command set is a de facto industry standard.

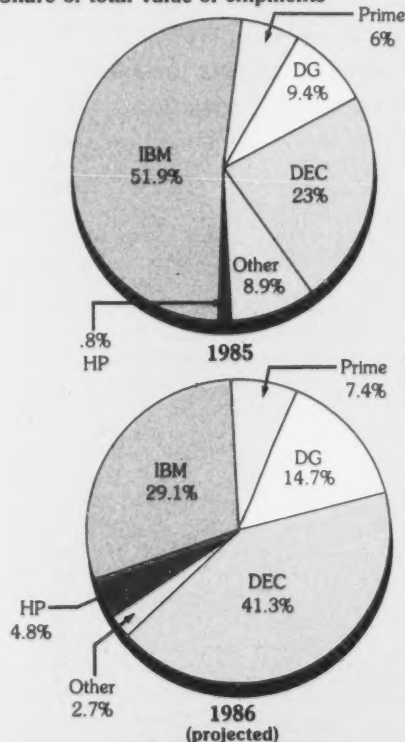
The U.S. Patent Office granted Hayes a patent in 1985 for "guard time," a period of silence that envelops one command so that it's not mistaken for a string of ordinary text. U.S. Robotics claims that royalty payments to Hayes

and Bizcomp Corp. (Sunnyvale, CA) for guard time could amount to as much as 5 percent of its sales, which it says is a significant sum.

Hayes declined to comment on the suit. U.S. Robotics made similar charges in a suit brought against Bizcomp in 1984. Bizcomp holds a patent for another part of the command set that controls the Hayes modem. Michael Eaton, president of Bizcomp, says the patent office has twice upheld Bizcomp's patent. Paying royalties on modem patents is not unusual, he says, adding that Bizcomp pays as much as 6 percent in royalties to AT&T for technology used in one of Bizcomp's modems. Eaton believes U.S. Robotics is pressing the suit as a delaying action to avoid paying royalties. □

## DEC PASSES IBM IN MINIS

Share of total value of shipments



Source: Annex Research and Computer Intelligence

Digital Equipment Corp.'s share of the total value (based on list price) of projected 1986 minicomputer shipments is expected to rise to 41 percent from 23 percent in 1985. IBM's similar share is projected to drop to 29 percent from 51 percent. The 1986 projection is based on shipments during the first six months of 1986, before IBM announced price/performance improvements in the System/3X line.

## Go ahead ... make my day

At the Bullet Stop in Marietta, GA, customers fire live ammo from M-16 and Uzi machine guns at products they hate. The most popular targets: computers.

One frustrated user brought in a computer, "shot the hell out of it," then put it in a box and sent it to the manufacturer, says Paul LaVista, owner of the shoot-'em-up emporium. Among LaVista's computer-hating customers was one woman who blew her micro away because she was unhappy with the results of a budget she developed on it. Computer makers are getting in on the act too, LaVista notes. One micro vendor filmed the icing of an IBM machine for a television commercial. □

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